

Peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir: An Effort by NGOs

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“There is no way to peace, peace is the way”_ Mahatma Gandhi

Abstract:

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has lost its identity. The 1947 partition of the country has imprinted long-lasting bitterness in the minds of people and drew a separating line (LOC) along the borders. It is certainly a hectic task to establish peace in the disturbed regions of the Jammu and Kashmir, but in no way outside the limits of possibility. The civil societies and NGOs, being neutral in character, can play a soothing role in maintaining peace and establishing of confidence among the people of valley.

Key words: Peace building, Cross Border Insurgency, NGO, Third Generation, Patriarchal Rule, ATHWAAS, Endangered Peace, Naya Kashmir, Dasta-Kari, non-Certifiable Role.

Introduction

The fifteenth of August 1947, not only changed the fate of Indian people but also wrote a script of Independent India. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir grew intense after the partition of the country in 1947 and with the evolution of militancy and cross border insurgency in 1989. The worst face of this conflict was seen in Jammu and Kashmir during last two and a half decades. While the atrocities in the valley were on the go, an emergence for building peace and confidence among the people was felt, to overcome the situation and to curb the conflict in a peaceful manner. Among all the Agencies, Institutions and Organisations, the role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) was prominently different because of their sympathetic and pacific approaches towards the process of peace building and development. The NGOs, being distinctive from that of government and other organisations, have enhanced the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir and worked unceasingly for the betterment of people affected by the conflict. The Peace building and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are closely related to each other. The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a very significant and predominant role in preventing the start or resumption of violence or conflict in almost every part of the world. The main purpose of Peace building is conflict prevention and easing of tension in the valley. Before taking into account the Peace building efforts in Jammu and Kashmir, one should look into the matter attentively and point out the reasons of conflict particularly in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Prior to the independence of India in 1947, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was under the

reign of Maharaja Dynasty. The emergence of building and maintaining peace in the conflict area of Jammu and Kashmir was felt with the uprising of militancy and cross border insurgency in 1989. The politically and socially recognised NGO's have the potential to pressurize the government to meet the necessities of people in terms of maintaining peace and security in Jammu and Kashmir.

There are two approaches to the conflict prevention; firstly the Militaristic approach which cannot settle the disputes alone, although being capable of implementing peace the military employs the different techniques that may sometimes prove unfavourable in certain circumstances. The second and most essential approach is the negotiated settlement or Peace building approach, to which most of the people on global level would show acceptance. So the work is best assigned to the NGOs and Civil Societies. The NGO's having no political status, associate itself to the conflict prevention and Peace building processes in the psychologically disturbed areas of the state. Some peace NGO's presently active in Jammu and Kashmir, have pointed out certain important but undesirable causes of violence like protests against Indian Government, patriarchal rule, post-world war consequences and the belief of alienation, aloofness and distinctness from Indian federation. While some of the researches reveal that terrorism and the military atrocities in the valley have worsened the condition since 1989 thereby hardening the labour of socially and politically recognised NGO's. Khan and Ayoub¹ in their writings provide a statistical data that the large number of people in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been affected with violence and economic downfall since 1989. Besides Peace building and conflict prevention, the civil societies and NGO's can have a leading role to play in the progress and development of the state because of the neutral character and a sympathetic approach towards the affected persons.

Realistically speaking, In order to accomplish the Peace building efforts in a particular region, the NGO's have to keep the Anthropological and geographical conditions of that region into consideration and join hands with local NGO's, institutions and communities to provide financial assistance to the needy and deserving people. For the establishment of peace in the conflict-ridden region, the civil societies and NGO's have to be vibrant and honest and at the same time local communities should accompany NGO's to make peace a reality. However people don't have much faith in the government and its institutions because of the personal interest of political leaders. The NGO's can act as the best mediators in loosening the tension between the states and countries.

Why civil societies and NGO's were required to maintain peace and help restoring normalcy in Kashmir? The answer lies in the background of conflict between India and Pakistan in 1947. The fate of people of Kashmir was to be decided by means of plebiscite and some prerequisites were laid by the then premier Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru but India and Pakistan; both claimed the territory to be its own asset which resulted in the erupting of mass demonstration, violent conflicts and a feeling of right to self-determination in the minds of people of Jammu and Kashmir. The more intensified form of this conflict was seen in 1989 with the uprising of militancy and cross-border terrorism. However the scene further intensified in 2010 unrest in Kashmir. The dispute has now grown so intense that negotiations, Mediations or reducing tensions seem to have a lesser applicability.

¹ Khan, J. I. & Ayoub, S. (2013) *Conflict and Economic Welfare: Insights from Kashmir*. Golden Research Thoughts, Vol, 2, Issue 7.

A commendable role has been played by various NGO's to rehabilitate the victims of 1989 insurgencies. This proved to be the main reason for requirement of NGO's to direct the state of Jammu and Kashmir towards the dawn of peace and an atmosphere free of violence and conflicts. The NGO's highlighted the problems of people in conflict-ridden areas and forced both the counterparts (*India and Pakistan*) to take measures to settle the dispute of Kashmir amicably. It is because of NGO's that a majority of people around the world came to know the problem of Kashmir. The civil societies and NGO's have not only prevented human rights violation but also enhanced the socio-economic condition of masses in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Chari and Chandran² in their work illuminates the different pathways to settle the dispute in Kashmir. Amongst the role played by various agencies, religion apart can play a very essential role in the prevention of conflict because religion is of great essence and importance in a way that it decreases the animosity between the countries. Almost whole of Asia is absorbed by the conflict and concept of war and violence is at its peak, so the peace of nations and collective security gets compromised thereby forcing the international brotherhood to take immediate steps to look into the matter. While pointing out the negative aspects of peace the Newman and Richmond in his book "*Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution*"³ perceives that peace can have adverse effects if it is prolonged and the actors could be considered as the spoilers to the conflict.

Peacebuilding and Youth

A. S. Raju⁴ in his research observed that the third generation⁵ people of India are holding a different outlook towards the hostile and strained relations between India and Pakistan. The NGO's currently active in the state have so far gained success in eliminating the hurdles in the way of peace and let the third generation (*youth brigade*) know the pacific solution of dispute. It is worth consideration that between the age group 15-35, youth comprises about 48% of the total population. The state with such youth power has got the ability to curb the violence only if the youth brigade is directed towards the possible solutions of the conflict. However the old and experienced persons can lead them towards the mass victory over the anti-social and anti-political elements. Moreover, youth of Jammu and Kashmir should be given maximum opportunities and a share in the developmental works to restore their confidence in Indian union. Besides this, the youth should be given Economic opportunities to develop their personality because in the absence of economic platform, the youth are supposed to deviate from their path as they are energetic and full of Vigour.

Women Participation

The role of women can never be undermined when it comes to building peace in the state. The women in Jammu and Kashmir have undoubtedly played a significant role in keeping the state intact by maintaining peace and order in the affected area, on individual level as well as collective level. A research conducted on the role of NGO's in conflict prevention by K. Suri⁶ in

² P.R. Chari & D.S. Chandran. (2001) *Kashmir: The Road Ahead*

³ Newman, E. & O.P. Richmond (2006). *Challenges to Peace building: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution*. Pg. X.

⁴ Raju, A. Subramaniam (2001). *Third Generation Indian Perspective of Kashmir Issue*. Ch-3. Pg. 15.

⁵ Stephen P. Cohen used the term 'Third Generation' for the first time in his writing, "A Generational Change", Seminar, New Delhi, no. 422, October 1994, pp. 17-20.

⁶ K. Suri (2013). *Engaging with Women in Conflict Areas: The Role of CSOS in Conflict Prevention & Peace Building in Jammu and Kashmir, India*.

2013 reveals an interesting statistics that women are more vulnerable to conflict and violence than that of men in Jammu and Kashmir due to the armed conflict between India and Pakistan. However the women's participation seems to be a good sign regarding the efforts of NGO's to maintain stable conditions in the affected areas. The ATHWASS; an initiative taken by Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), brought women from all religions to discuss the safety of women in conflict and to ensure their future by creating the self-help groups. The inclusion of women in peace processes have not only put an end to the gender bias but also included the people with different mental abilities and sympathetic approach.

Multi-Sectorial Approach by NGOs

The NGO's and civil society organizations have discovered novel ways and certain multi-disciplinary approaches or multi-sectorial approaches to prevent conflict and build confidence among the varied and divergent sections of the society. The multi-sectorial approach is an innovative technique to implement peace in the regions, where conflicts have resulted in drastic changes in human conduct and behaviour. The endangered peace in the valley has cost many precious lives and belongings of masses. Amongst this, the NGOs have tried to employ certain innovative techniques to get rid of violence and secure the future of people. In the extreme North Eastern direction of Kashmir, the Neelam (*Kishanganga*) valley bisects India and Pakistan. Some of the researchers gave the insight about the Kashmiri nationalism and credit Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as the father of Kashmiri nationalism and due to his innovative concept of *Naya Kashmir*:⁷ the abolishment of feudal system. Various Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) have been adopted by both India and Pakistan but were unable to restore peace completely in the valley.

Education

One of the perspectives of conflict resolution in Jammu and Kashmir is education although the sentiments of the people regarding the right to self-determination cannot be transferred but the approach towards the conflict would be amicable. In a survey conducted in the countries of south Asia, the NGO's are relying on education as a means for the prevention of conflict and maintaining stable conditions in a country. Education changes the human mind, behaviour and conduct. It will be better to educate the people of Jammu and Kashmir about the actual reasons of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Now-a-days NGOs visit different schools to ensure adequate presence of children in schools. It is because of education that the longstanding betrayal and hatred can be erased from the hearts of people. What is more, the people from all walks of life have shown complete acceptance to curb violence by non-violent means until their sentiments are shattered. Apart from this, the youth have come forward and explored themselves to save the people and state from repercussions of the violence.

Tourism

⁷ *Flames of the Chinar: An autobiography* By Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah; The former politician and Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The book was translated from Urdu, by Khushwant Singh and published in 1993. Sheikh Abdullah left no stone unturned, to uplift the Kashmiri society from Despotic rule of feudal lords and Elites.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is abundantly gifted with various priceless natural resources as forests; an efficient source of income which can be used as a measure for building peace and stability in the valley. The tourism has been given immense importance as it can be used as a good technique for promotion or restoration of peace in the valley. In order to make peace a reality, tourism should be encouraged in Jammu and Kashmir, because tourism undoubtedly provides Economic opportunities to the local people especially youth which fall prey to conflicts easily. Meanwhile, the people who are economically sound; are supposed to be less vulnerable to conflicts and terrorism. So tourism should be priority as it has the ingredients of a peaceful and prosperous Kashmir.

Handicrafts

What is more, the people of Kashmir along with protagonists and other associated agencies want to put an end to this conflict by promoting certain skills and enhancing public private relations. That is why NGO's are now-a-days gaining ground as they have employed certain approaches and pathways to curb the increasing violence along with diverse policies and techniques. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has lost its identity or more precisely, conflict has become identity of people inhabiting in the valley. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is famous for their hand-made materials however violence has interrupted the handicrafts industry as well during the course of conflict in valley. The setback to this sector can be simply pointed out with the degrading effects on the people and their lack of interest in the handmade materials (Dasta-Kari). The NGOs prevalent in the conflicted area has raised the status of this industry by providing funds and necessary assistance in order to restore the lost heritage.

Conclusion

The feasible, vibrant, untiring but non-certifiable role in avoiding and preventing conflicts and having a mere personal interest in the political power, authority and elections the NGO's can play a pivotal role in building peace and rehabilitate the victims of war and militaristic atrocities. However the present circumstances in the state of Jammu and Kashmir demand peace and NGO's and civil societies working collaboratively have got the potential to implement peace in the valley to save the victims from further repercussions of conflict. The government should take measures to ensure safety and protection of the Kashmiri people by joining hands with local people and pressure groups. For me, Education is the best possible solution to overcome the Kashmir problem. To prolong the peace in the state would mean to extend the pain; the people of Kashmir are experiencing and the day is not far, when the Emperor Jahangir's beautiful lines regarding Kashmir (*"if there is paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this"*) may have some unpleasant and deteriorating interpretations.

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